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THE JAMAICA EXHIBITION.

BY HIS EXCELLENCY, SIR HENRY A. BLAKE, GOVERNOR OF
JAMAICA.

THE 27th of January, 1891, has been decided upon as the day on which will be opened the Jamaica Exhibition ; an event of very great importance for the West Indies generally, and one that must have a singular interest for the United States, with its many millions of colored citizens.

For the means by which this exhibition is being carried out are different from those by which any exhibition hitherto held has run its course to failure or success. Heretofore the exhibitions held in various parts of the world have been guaranteed by government, or started by large capitalists, filled by manufacturers, and supported by the restless and inquiring millions of the Caucasian races. Here in Jamaica, with its population of 620,000, of whom but 14,000 are white, the exhibition has asked for no government guarantee ; its funds are provided on the security of many hundreds of guarantors of sums from £10 to £1,000 ; and its success is already assured by the hearty and united efforts of the entire population.

The enterprise came about in this way. In September, 1889, it was considered advisable to assist the intellectual development of the black population. Fifty years ago the conscience of England conferred upon them their freedom. Still later protective tariffs on one side of the Atlantic and foreign bounties on the other emancipated the island from the thralldom of a single industry, and the readiness with which the people availed themselves of the foreign markets showed that it was only necessary to bring before them the productive capabilities of their lands, to teach them what to produce in addition to yams, oranges, and bananas, and to point out to them the ready outlet for all their products, in order to insure a stable prosperity for them in the future.

The first idea was to hold a local exhibition in Kingston and bring before the people exhibits of the vegetable and mineral products of the island, to be afterwards forwarded to the permanent Colonial Exhibition in the Imperial Institute, to be opened in London in May, 1891. With this view, early in September, 1889, a meeting was called of the principal merchants in Kingston, and the proposal was laid before them. It was decided that the exhibition must be carried out by private guarantee, and that at least £10,000 would be necessary. I accepted the position of president, and called for guarantees in sums of not less than £10. The proposal was warmly received throughout the island, and guarantees poured in so fast that at the next meeting our ideas had expanded into an international exhibition in which free space should be offered to all comers. Remembering that the primary purpose of the exhibition was an educational object-lesson showing what might be accomplished by the intelligent coöperation of all classes, we asked for no government guarantee. We appointed no paid officers. Architects and engineers came forward, designed the buildings free of charge, and undertook to carry out their erection. Everybody with technical knowledge on any subject freely offered his services to the committee. Parochial committees were nominated, and it was determined that the exhibition should be opened on the 27th January, 1891.

Three gentlemen in the island at once offered to advance £15,000 on the security of the guarantee. A site was required. It was only necessary to pitch upon the desired spot when it was immediately placed, without charge, unreservedly at the disposal of the committee by the owner and the lessee. So far as the building was concerned, all was now plain sailing. An engineer went to New York with full power to complete contracts for the supply of lumber and other material. The grounds were all ploughed over and levelled, and by the aid of tree-removers imported from England large numbers of palm, bamboo, cocoanut, and other tropical trees were taken up and planted therein. This portion of the work was undertaken by the director of public gardens, and wherever a suitable tree was found the owner displayed generous readiness to hand it over for the embellishment of the exhibition grounds. The first tree thus transplanted was a Gru-Gru palm, forty-three feet high, which was successfully carried for four miles from King's House grounds, and now occu-

pies a position in front of the main building. All this work took a couple of months. In the meantime guarantees came pouring in from the thirteen parishes into which Jamaica is divided, until a sum of nearly £30,000 was offered. Had we accepted guarantees of £5 or less, that sum might have been trebled.

It now became necessary to bring to the knowledge of the thousands of the peasantry who live in the mountainous centre of the island, and who rarely see the newspapers, the fact that the exhibition was to be held, and to explain to them in simple language its object and the probable effect upon their well-being. Ninety thousand copies of a message of the Governor were distributed by the ministers of religion and schoolmasters, and the immediate effect showed that the black population were ready and willing to move forward, and only waited for some person to show them the way. In the message I said :

“All persons in the island will be at liberty to send for exhibition samples of anything either grown or made by them. Prizes will be given for the best samples of products or manufactures. Samples of sugar-canes, cacao, kola, bananas, oranges, ground provisions, cocoanuts, sisal hemp, manilla hemp, tobacco, cigars, cinchona, coffee, peppers, ginger, pimento, rum, logwood, fustic, annatto, castor-oil, coconut oil, cattle and horses, sheep, pigs, poultry, birds, fishes, turtle, bees, carpentry, cabinet-making, boots, shoes, basket-work, nets, mats, goldsmith's and silversmith's work, models of cottage homes, boats, etc., fancy work, curiosities, are mentioned as showing the sort of things which can be exhibited by the inhabitants of Jamaica; but this does not include *all*. There is *nothing* which you grow or make which will not find a place in the exhibition.

“And you will also have the opportunity, which may never come to you again, of seeing what is grown and made in the other West Indian islands, in other colonies of the British Empire, in Great Britain and Ireland, and in other great countries of the world. You will find a thousand things not only to amuse and interest you, but also to instruct and improve you.

“I therefore earnestly advise you to set to work at once to prepare for our great exhibition, and to make arrangements in good time which will enable you and your children to come up to Kingston in order that you may have the pleasure of seeing not only the articles which you or your relatives or friends send up to the exhibition, but also the many interesting and wonderful things which will be sent from other parts of the world.

“The exhibition may be expected to aid in enriching all classes. Your children's children will reap the benefits.”

Meanwhile committees were formed in England, Scotland, and the United States. The Queen graciously consented to lend two pictures. The Prince of Wales accepted the patronage of the exhibition and Prince George of Wales undertook the duty of opening it. The invitations to foreign countries were for-

warded by the Imperial Foreign Office, and the British Parliament granted £1,000 in aid of the exhibition. The local legislature passed a law giving corporate powers to the exhibition commissioners and regulating the entry of exhibits.

The answers to the invitations to foreign countries and our sister-colonies have now been received. Had we double the space at our disposal, it would not satisfy the demands. We have added thirty thousand square feet to our original space, and in our desire to accommodate our visitors have pared away the portion originally allotted to Jamaica until we begin to feel like a too hospitable host who has given up his house to his guests and squeezed himself and his family into the pantry.

At home the response of the people to the call for coöperation is full of hope for those who are interested in the future of the people of the West Indies. A thoughtless estimate of these people has been generally accepted. It may be summed up in the statement that they are densely ignorant, unspeakably lazy, and incapable of improvement. My experience for the past twelve months has shown me that this estimate is not true. During that time I have visited every portion of Jamaica and spoken to large numbers of the people. I have met the peasant proprietors in the mountain valleys, where, with the exception of the clergyman and the doctor, the face of a white man is not often seen; I have met them in the lowland plains of the seaboard; and, while there is much ignorance and backwardness, I am bound to say that I have met among them men equal in intelligence, shrewdness, and dignity of mind to men of their class in the United Kingdom. The well-built houses that the traveller finds with increasing frequency in the mountain districts show that a real improvement in the standard of comfort and mode of life is in progress. Nor is the estimate of laziness a true one. Both men and women work with the full average of diligence. I wish the women worked less hard abroad and confined their labors more to household matters; for a mother laboring in the fields means a neglected family and a house bereft of the comforts of a home. Material prosperity may be increased by the field labor of the housewife, but it is dearly purchased by the sacrifice of moral progress consequent on the neglect of those home duties that form the basis of social refinement.

No sooner had the parochial committees and local sub-committees settled down to work than the people showed how much in earnest they could be when occasion arose. Wherever I went addresses were presented dealing almost exclusively with the subject. Sometimes I was stopped by the roadside and asked to examine something either made or being made for the exhibition. These were not often objects found in exhibitions. Their uses were frequently problematical. But they were all to be welcomed as evidence of an awakened interest and an anxiety to do something. One day as we drove from a meeting in a distant part of the country, we were overtaken by a bright-looking black boy on horseback, who cantered beside the carriage, eyeing me rather wistfully. I spoke to him, and he then found courage to ask me if I would like to see what he was doing for the exhibition. I said, "Certainly," when, giving rein to his pony, he darted forward at a wild gallop. At a turn in the road we found him standing, bareheaded, and in his hands a box containing a number of rude carvings of horses, cows, sheep, etc., some of which showed the germs of real merit. His father, a respectable-looking shoemaker, stood behind with an approving smile at his son's achievement. The boy, about thirteen or fourteen years of age, was an exceedingly bright and intelligent lad, and the conflict between modest shyness and anxiety to submit his efforts for my approval was very apparent. Every evening after his labor in the fields was over he had devoted himself to carving these figures in the soft cretaceous limestone of the district. His joy was extreme when we purchased some of his work.

The exhibition building is now partially finished. It stands on a most beautiful site, with a view from the front commanding the town and harbor, while on the other side the hills that bound the plains of Liguanea rise tier over tier to where the Blue Mountain Peak lifts its head 7,500 feet up into the ever-changing cloud strata of the West Indian skies. In the grounds an industrial village has been built, the cost of every house being carefully noted, so that the people may see the approximate expense of these improved dwellings. A model school is attached for the information of country managers. Here will be carried on some of the native industries, such as the making of cassava, etc., and a small number of Caribs from St. Vincent will pursue their vocation of basket-making.

While the primary object of the exhibition is the industrial education of the people of Jamaica, the commissioners look farther afield and hope that it may be of great service in stimulating the production and foreign trade of the entire West Indies. With a population of over one and a half millions, and an aggregate foreign trade of twelve million pounds, capable of great expansion, the trade of the British West Indies is worth competing for, and there are indications that the competition will be keen.

Jamaica at one time may be said to have depended entirely upon sugar, and the contraction of that industry was followed for a while by serious difficulties. There is now danger that the cultivators may fling themselves as exclusively into the growing of bananas, a crop that is paying splendidly in the virgin soil of recently-cleared ground in sheltered mountain valleys, and on the highly-fertilized fields of abandoned sugar estates. But the banana is a very exhausting crop, and those who look forward see many objections to resting the hopes of future prosperity too largely on the now expanding banana-culture. We hope to learn from those who visit the exhibition what products they require that we can grow, especially non-perishable commodities, and then to show the people how to grow them, with the assurance that the market is ready. In this way we shall divide the risks from drought, flood, or hurricane, and make the position of Jamaica more stable and secure.

Beyond this, we want to induce people of education to come and settle in Jamaica, and manufacturers to see for themselves how favorably circumstanced is the island for the investment of capital. The absence of coal is an obstacle; but in the hundred rivers that water the island there is ample power for the working of any amount of machinery that is likely to be used. Besides, an inducement is offered in the fact that the "excursions and alarums" between capital and labor are here unknown, and one of the most serious risks of capital is thus eliminated. Those who know the black population best are satisfied that neither now nor in the near future is there any probability of such combinations as are found dealing heavy blows against the prosperity of every business in which capital is invested in other countries.

Some years ago I asked an accomplished American lady, who had just completed a tour around the world, what was the most

beautiful place she had seen. She answered, without hesitation, "Jamaica." I did not then know the island. Now that I do know it I think that in all probability her judgment was correct. Yet except to very few the island is even now a *terra incognita*. During the early history of Jamaica she owed her wealth by turns to piracy and sugar. Of the pirates, some were hanged at Gallows Point; some retired on their fortunes to live like gentlemen at home; one, Sir Henry Morgan, was made lieutenant-governor of the island, where he distinguished himself by his severity to the sea-rovers and as a liberal supporter of the church. To our prudent hankering after New York Jamaica owes the rise of the sugar industry, for in 1675, Surinam having been ceded to the Dutch in exchange for New Amsterdam, now New York, twelve hundred of its inhabitants arrived in Jamaica, where they settled in Westmoreland, and immediately devoted themselves to the cultivation of sugar, as the old history has it, "inspired by their poverty with the resolution to labor." With the rise of the sugar industry came the days of the wealthy proprietors who covered the island with mansions built usually on sites commanding views of ideal beauty. Here they entertained right royally, as men could entertain when sugar sold at sixty and seventy pounds per ton, and the eternal summer was one long round of social pleasures, interrupted from time to time by servile insurrections. In those days the traveller who visited the island was pretty certain to be a person of consideration; every house was open to him, and the remains of old libraries that have here and there survived the periodical cataclysms show that the society of the old time was as cultivated as it was hospitable.

The decline in the value of sugar, which has been going on for a hundred years, sadly clipped the wings of the Jamaican proprietors; the manumission of the slaves completing the ruin of many. By this time old habits and new prices produced the usual result. The properties were mortgaged to their full value to the merchants, into whose hands were paid almost the entire twenty millions voted by the British Parliament for the creation of a free people; the "great houses" were abandoned, some being left standing with plate, pictures, furniture, and library intact, until the pictures fell from their frames or were cut out and used as tarpaulins to cover mule loads; the books were devoured, leaf and cover, by the voracious bookworms; the furniture fell

to pieces, and the plate alone found its way back to England. Year after year the roll of abandoned sugar estates grew larger, and the society of Jamaica grew smaller. The roofs of the sugar factories fell in; the once busy water-wheels were idle; the long aqueducts succumbed to the continued succession of gentle earthquake shocks and became picturesque ruins, and all were soon hidden in the close embrace of the wanton tropical creepers. It may readily be imagined that during these long years the number of visitors to Jamaica grew less and less. Ruin was preached at home and abroad, and none but artists cared to examine the beauties of decay.

But all this time events were showing that freedom holds a blessing in both hands. The people who in times gone by had worked as slaves on the estates were gradually extending into the higher grounds of the interior, acquiring property, reclaiming and planting, with all the diligence that is the offspring of ownership. While ruin was being noised abroad and scared capital avoided the island, these people were busy laying a broader and deeper foundation of prosperity than that which had gone before, until we suddenly awoke to the fact that these thousands of rivulets of business that filtered down from the mountain clearings united in a volume of trade once and a half as great as that of fifty years ago. In 1847 the exports of Jamaica amounted to £1,671,656, two-thirds of which was sugar, then £24 per ton. The imports amounted to £541,287. The aggregate amount of trade was £2,212,943. In 1889 the exports amounted to £1,828,590; the imports to £1,695,605; making a total of £3,524,195. The trebling of the imports shows most clearly the advancement of the people in their standard of living, and it must be remembered that the greater portion of these exports and imports is now produced on, or paid for from the produce of, lands that fifty years ago were outside the area of cultivation, leaving large properties intact around the seaboard plains, that only await the application of fresh capital to give returns equal to any area of similar extent in the world.

It is hardly to be wondered at that even with the curiosity of a yearly increasing travelling public, who have sought out the remotest corners of picturesque Europe, Jamaica has remained practically unvisited, for until a very few months ago there was not a hotel in the island; the accommodation for strangers being

confined to one or two boarding-houses in Kingston. Doubtless the appetite for travel grows by what 'tis fed on, but the stranger who determines to travel without introductions in a country where no arrangements exist for the reception of travellers must have a long purse, a thick skin, and an unlimited stock of patience. But now ample accommodation is being provided. Under a law passed last spring guaranteeing 3 per cent. on the capital invested, large hotels are being built on approved plans not alone in Kingston and its neighborhood, but in various parts of the island. These hotels will be completed in time for the opening of the exhibition, and travellers will find excellent accommodation that will enable them to examine with comfort the beauties of the island.

What those beauties are, who can describe to the satisfaction of another? From the moment when the steamer glides into the harbor past the batteries of Port Royal in the still cold morning air, no two travellers will see the same picture. The gaze of one sweeps round the grand amphitheatre of hills; that of another rests with satisfaction on the great, placid harbor in which the serrated mountains are reflected, on the tall masts that fringe the shore and the blue wreaths of smoke that rise from what appears to be a forest of palms, and tamarinds, and other tropical trees, in whose shade is concealed the busy city of Kingston. And so in travelling round the country, one notes the exquisite blue shades of distant hills; another has an eye only for the details of the foreground; a third sees birds or butterflies; a fourth, flowers or ferns; a fifth may travel through the most beautiful scenery in the world and retain no picture beyond the driver's back and the moving heads of the horses. But whether the visitor comes as an artist, a scientific observer, an invalid, a capitalist, or a traveller seeking change of scene and interest, Jamaica offers every inducement for a visit.

The first consideration for those who desire to pay more than a flying visit to a tropical country is climate, and in this matter there has been serious misconception heretofore regarding Jamaica. As a matter of fact, the climate of Jamaica is as healthy as that of any tropical country in the world, and more healthy than that of most. This is shown by the mean of the birth- and death-rates for the past five years. The mean birth-rate has been 36.6 per thousand; the death-rate, 22.92. Of this latter, 1.75 per thousand

died under the age of one year. Diversified as is the surface of the island, from the high mountains of the centre to the rolling plains of the seaboard, the temperature is, of course, very varied. Near the summits of the hills it is sub-tropical, varying from 63° to 75° at 3 p. m. At the sea-level it ranges from 75° to 90° . But here the heat is tempered by a fresh sea-breeze that blows all day and a cool land-breeze that sweeps over the hot plains from the mountains all night. It is in the imprudent exposure to this cold breeze, when heated by exercise, that the danger of tropical fevers lies. It is so pleasant that new comers, who carefully avoid a draught at home, are tempted to enjoy the sense of refreshing coolness, forgetting the danger from the sudden check to the action of the pores. If the sun in the West Indies were as dangerous as it is supposed to be, the white male population must long ago have died out, for they walk and ride in the sun, play cricket all day, and otherwise disport themselves after the manner of Englishmen, without any ill effects; but I do not think the example can prudently be followed by persons fresh from higher latitudes.

The scenery is as varied as the climate. Every parish—there are thirteen in the island—claims for itself preëminence of beauty in some respect, and every parish is so far right that there will be found within its borders some point to satisfy the most exacting seeker after the beautiful. Look at the coast scenery of one, the mountain views of another, the river gorges of a third, the park-like expanses of a fourth; the pictures filled in with towering trees, and flowering shrubs, and graceful ferns, and lovely orchids.

Stand in the early summer morning at the Clifton Mount pass above Newcastle, when the sun is just bursting over the hills, and the air is fresh and pure as Eden, and look to the westward over the lower ranges that stretch away to the gray distance of the Clarendon Mountains, from whose valleys the mists are rising in fleecy masses, creeping up the hillsides until they melt under the warm kisses of the morning glory, while the great shadows of the hilltops shrink down the opposite slopes of the valleys before the rising sun. Down beyond the valley at your feet, where a thousand feet below the Hope River rises, are spread the plain of Liguanea and the harbor, formed by the long spit of land, at the extremity of which you can with a glass count the houses of what remains of old Port Royal—just

enough to afford shelter to a few fishermen and pilots and the people employed as workmen about the dockyard and forts. The other portion of the wicked old capital rests under the keels of the war-ships that are lying at their moorings. The old bell of the parish church, the only property of the buried town and treasures ever recovered, was brought up by an adventurous American diver, and is now in the possession of the Jamaica Institute. On the north of the harbor you see the town of Kingston with its fifty miles of streets. The plain is studded with the houses of the wealthier inhabitants, and beyond the Red Hills, once the sanitarium of Jamaica, the bright green squares of the Caymanas sugar estate stand out in vivid contrast to the dark foliage of the low forest that stretches along the Spanish Tower Road. Still more distant, in the plain of St. Catherine the old town of Santiago de la Vega recalls the memory of the stirring days when the foundations of Jamaican history were laid by the conquering pioneers from Spain. That old town has seen its full share of carnage in the ups and downs of West Indian warfare, and until twenty years ago it remained the seat of government and the centre of the social life of Jamaica. Since then it has drunk deep of the waters of adversity, and shanties were repaired with the flooring of ruined ballrooms. But the tide has turned, and houses that five years ago were valueless are now being repaired for ready tenants. It is not likely that the social glories of the old times will soon return, but the place shows signs of entering upon a period of solid prosperity. It will probably be a favorite tourist centre, as around it are some of the most beautiful riding and driving roads in the country, while, being on the railway at the junction of the two great branches, from it ready access can be had to any part of the island.

All these hills that now look so bright in the morning sun are thickly populated, and down the mountain paths on market-days may be seen long strings of women with baskets containing a varied assortment of fruits and vegetables on their heads. They make nothing of a walk of fifteen miles to market, and form picturesque groups of color as they swing along, chattering gayly with their companions. The marketing is usually left to the women, the men remaining at work in their fields. Along the northern side the loads are most frequently bananas, for this is the part of the island where that trade has most expanded. Almost daily a

fruit steamer arrives from America. Immediately telegrams are despatched to the inland post-offices, and the bananas are cut and carried down to the port, where loading goes on day and night until completed. These fast fruit steamers are fitted up for passengers and afford means of frequent communication with New York and Boston. A hotel is now projected at Anotto Bay, to which port some of the fruit steamers come. Thence tourists will be forwarded to Kingston, a drive of thirty miles, by the mountain road that follows the course of the Wagg Water River. Half-way are the public gardens of Castleton, where there will also be a small hotel or rest-house. These gardens are not only most beautiful, but they contain one of the finest collection of palms in the world.

Jamaica is in regular communication with Europe by the Royal Mail steamers fortnightly from Southampton, the West India and Pacific steamers from Liverpool, and the Clyde Line from London and Glasgow; while communication with Halifax is secured by the Pickford and Black West India Line, sailing monthly *viâ* Bermuda, and with the United States by the Atlas Line and Anchor Line from New York, and the fruit steamers of the Boston Fruit Company, the Wessels Company, and John E. Kerr & Co. Besides these means of communication, the Plant Steamship Line is about to establish communication between Jamaica and Tampa, so that travellers who may dread the possible rough waters off Cape Hatteras can go by land to Florida and at Tampa find themselves within three days of Jamaica, over usually quiet southern seas.

Should a regular succession of visitors be attracted to the island, Jamaica must profit greatly. But the benefits will not be entirely on her side, for a visit to a beautiful and healthy island, whose history began before Jacques Cartier had discovered Hochelaga or Lord Baltimore had settled Maryland, cannot be without interest; and whether the traveller sees Jamaica in the early morning as she rises fresh and sparkling from the deep blue waters of the Caribbean Sea, or looks at dewy eve when the red flashes of the setting sun tinge with rose and gold the diadems of fleecy clouds that crown her mountain summits, he must acknowledge that there are some grounds for the pride which her sons take in her as the Pearl of the Antilles.

HENRY A. BLAKE.